

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02 /039 W
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P 221404Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7613
INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, BR
SUBJ: AN ALTERNATE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY?

1. ARMY MINISTER BETHLEM AND NAVY MINISTER HENNING ON MAY 20
ISSUED FORMAL DENIALS OF A STATEMENT PUBLISHED MAY 19
IN O ESTADO DE SAO PAULO ALLEGING THAT BOTH MINISTERS HAD
PUBLICLY EXPRESSED THEMSELVES AS BEING "SYMPATHETIC" TO A
PORSPECTIVE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY BY RETIRED FOUR-STAR GENERAL
EULER BENTES MONTEIRO. BOTH MINISTERS AFFIRMED THEIR SUPPORT
OF THE CANDIDACY OF GENERAL JOAO BAPTISTA FIGUEIREDO, AND BETHLEM
CHARGED THAT THE STORY WAS "INTENDED TO CREATE DISTRUST AND
DISCORD IN THE ARMY, "TO WHOSE UNITY HE WAS DEVOTING HIS PROFESSIONAL
ACTIVITIES. ALSO ON MAY 20, PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESMAN COL.

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RUBEN LUDWIG CATEGORICALLY DENIED A STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT
THE ARMY OPPOSES FIGUEIREDO ATTRIBUTED TO GENERAL HUGO ABREU,
GEISEL'S FORMER MILITARY HOUSEHOLD CHIEF WHO RESIGNED IN JANAURY
IN OPPOSITION TO THE UNILATERAL MANNER IN WHAICH GEISEL SELECTED
FIGUEIREDO AS HIS SUCCESSOR.

2. THESE STATEMENTS AND OTHERS ATTRIBUTED TO OR CONCERNING THE

ALLEGED POLITICAL POSITION OF RANKING MEMBERS OF THE BRAZILIAN ARMED FORCES HIGHLIGHTED AN EXTREMELY ACTIVE WEEK THAT SAW THE MUSHROOMING OF A POSSIBLE MILITARY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY IN OPPOSITION TO THAT OF GENERAL FIGUEIREDO. RETIRED GENERAL BENTES MONTEIRO, WHOSE NAME AS A (VARY) DARK HORSE HAD BEEN HINTED AT INTERMITTENTLY FOR MONTHS, SET THE SPIRAL OF EVENTS IN MOTION BY STATING FROM A WEEKEND RETREAT MAY 13-14 THAT HE WOULD SERIOUSLY CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ALTERNATE CANDIDACY IF ONE WERE OFFERED TO HIM UNDER THE RIGHT CONDITIONS. SINCE THEN, A WELTER OF OFTEN CONFLICTING STORIES HAVE APPEARED IN THE PRESS, THE BROAD IMPORT OF WHICH IS THAT GENERAL ABREU AND SOME OTHER MILITARY ELEMENTS, TOGETHER WITH ARENA DISSIDENTS AND ELEMENTS OF THE MDB AND OTHER CIVILIAN SECTORS, HAVE BEEN "ARTICULATING" A BENTES MONTEIRO CANDIDACY FOR SOME TIME. THE MOVEMENT, WHICH REPORTEDLY ANTEDATED BUT DID NOT BEGIN IN EARNEST UNTIL AFTER FIGUEIREDO'S SELECTION JANUARY 5, IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN GIVEN CONSIDERABLE IMPETUS---AND INCREASING CIVILIAN (INCLUDING MDB) SUPPORT--BY THE WIDESPREAD DISSATISFACTION GENERATED BY THE HIGHLY AUTHORITARIAN MANNER IN WHICH ARENA'S CANDIDATES FOR THE STATE GOVERNORSHIPS WERE SELECTED LAST MONTH (BRASILIA 3922). ABREU HAS LET IT BE KNOWN THAT HE HAS BEEN KEEPING MINISTER BETHLEM INFORMED OF HIS ACTIVITIES.

3. THESE DEVELOPMENTS COINCIDED WITH--AND LARGELY OVERSHADOWED--THE LONG AWAITED PUBLIC REVELATION BY SENATE PRESIDENT PETRONIO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PORTELLA OF THE BROAD OUTLINES OF THE PACKAGE OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES HE HAS BEEN CONSTRUCTING DURING HIS MANY RECENT MONTHS OF THE DIALOGUE WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF DIVERSE SECTORS OF SOCIETY (SEE SEPTTEL).

4. THE EMBASSY IS PREPARING A MESSAGE ON DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING A POSSIBLE SECOND MILITARY CANDIDACY TO OPPOSE FIGUEIREDO IN THE OCTOBER 15 INDIRECT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. JOHNSON

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